

Prague as a Living History: Anatomy of a European Capital

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Course Description:

This course, consisting mostly of excursions, will introduce students to the history of the Czech Republic and of its capital Prague while also showing the development of its urban structure and main social functions. Through this single - and beautiful - example students should gain a deeper understanding of the particularities and intricacies of urban life in wider cultural and political context as it evolved through the centuries.

After an introductory lecture in the classroom, most of the time shall be spent walking through the town, visiting historical sites, churches, museums and galleries, as well as other places of interest

Course Objectives/Learning Outcomes:

Students should acquire basic knowledge about the development of architecture in historical contexts as well as awareness of contemporary urban trends with regard to contemporary global challenges. They should also gain basic ability to analyze historical buildings and art objects from the point of their style, age and provenience as well as to connect them with the historical and contemporary social functions.

Grading Policy:

- Class participation/attendance/quizzes: 15 %
- Presentation: 15 %
- Mid-term test: 20 %
- Final test: 25 %
- Final paper: 25 %

Mandatory Completion Policy

Note that all mandatory assignments and exams must be completed to the best of your ability in order for your final grade to be issued. Failure to complete a mandatory assignment or exam may result in a failing grade.

Letter Grade	Percentage	Description
A+	97-100	Excellent Work
A	93-97	Outstanding Work
A-	90-92	
B+	87-89	Good work
B	83-86	
B-	80-82	
C+	77-79	Acceptable Work
C	73-76	
C-	70-72	
D+	67-69	Work that is significantly below average
D	63-66	
D-	60-62	
F	0-59	Work that does not meet the minimum standards for passing the course

AEP Academic Integrity Policy

Plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty are not tolerated. The use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) for the development of knowledge and learning is encouraged at many stages of the learning process. While we value technology for educational purposes, we also value originality and the retainment of knowledge, and thus using AI for assignments and examinations, even if rephrased, is strictly prohibited and considered an academic integrity violation, unless the instructor explicitly allows for it in the context of evaluated work

AEP Non-Discrimination/Harassment Policy

The AEP program in Prague promotes a diverse learning environment where the dignity, worth, and differences of each individual are valued and respected. Discrimination and harassment, whether based on a person's race, gender, sexual orientation, color, religion, national origin, age, disability, or other legally protected characteristics, are repugnant and completely inconsistent with our objectives. Retaliation against individuals for raising good faith claims of harassment and/or discrimination is prohibited.

AEP Diversity Policy

AEP is committed to fostering an inclusive and welcoming community that values diversity in all its forms. We believe that one of the most meaningful lessons of studying abroad is learning to navigate and appreciate differences with curiosity and an open mind. While engaging across differences can sometimes be challenging or uncomfortable, these moments are essential for growth and learning. We recognize that every member of our community, even with the best intentions, may occasionally make missteps. Our commitment is to provide a supportive environment where respectful and honest dialogue helps us learn from these experiences, ensuring that every student has the opportunity to thrive and broaden their perspective.

Weekly Schedule

Week 1

CEE Introductory Lecture Series

AEP Introductory Lecture Series

Week 2

How Statues Speak - Charles Bridge and Beyond

Introduction – Prague’s genius loci. Changing functions of statues in public space. Attributes of saints.

Week 3

The Castle - Power and defense, security and luxury

Medieval castles. Castle as a center of power. Symbolisms of Prague Castle. St. Vitus’s Cathedral.

Prague castle today.

Week 4

Vyšehrad Castle - Legends and Memory

Class Description Medieval chronicles and Romantic forgeries. Cultural memory. Old Czech mythology and the “national revival”.

Week 5

Christianity Comes to Town - Convent of St. Agnes of Bohemia

Role of the Church in pre-modern periods. Christianity and the early history of kingdoms. Monastery as a centre of culture. Medieval art.

Week 6

Medieval Town of Prague - Prosperity and Revolution

Aspects of medieval town settlements. Medieval urban housekeeping. The guilds. Hussite movement and the early Reformation.

Week 7

Prague as Heavenly Jerusalem - The New Town of Charles IV

Charles IV of Luxembourg and his foundational activities. Bohemia as a centre of the Holy Roman Empire. Heavenly patterns in urban space and relic collections.

Week 8

The City Made of Paper - Municipal Museum and Langweil's Model of Prague

History of the City of Prague in outline. Changes in downtown urbanism in the last two hundred years.

Week 9

Baroque Devotion in the Landscape - Loreto and the Infant Jesus

Pilgrimage and Baroque religious festivity. Counter-Reformation in Central Europe. Churches, chapels and Crucifixions and the emergence of a sacred landscape.

Week 10

Expanding the City: Vinohrady hundred years ago

The fall of the Habsburg Monarchy. Czech society before Czech Republic. Origins of "Great Prague" and the development of suburban areas in the era of industrialization and demographic explosion.

Week 11

Modern Architecture: from "Art Nouveau" to the Dancing House

Different faces of modernity and its controversies in the 20th and 21st centuries: Historicism, pseudo-styles, Art Nouveau, constructivism. Disputes about the "traditional face" of Prague. The Dancing House – provocative or respectful building? The Golden Angel – a people friendly modern architecture.

Week 12

Prefab Housing: Prague's suburbs in the era of "Real Socialism"

The idea of communal housing. The socialist concepts of the city. Housing standards in the time of Normalization – "Husák's 3+1". Contemporary controversies about the values of the architecture from the communist era.

Week 13

Final Test, Evaluation, Closing Discussion

Readings:

- ČORNEJ PETR – POKORNÝ Jiří, A brief history of the Czech lands, Praha : Práh, 2000.
- DEMETZ Peter, Prague in Black and Gold: The history of a city, Penguin Books, 1998.
- DUDÁK Vladislav, Prague Pilgrim, or Prague from every side, Praha : Baset, 1995.
- POLIŠENSKÝ Josef, History of Czechoslovakia in Outline, Praha: Bohemia International, 1991.
- RIPELLINO Angelo Maria, Magic Prague, London : Picador, 1995.
- RYGL Tomáš, Prague. Detailed Picture Guide, Praha : ATP 2007.
- TEICH Mikuláš (ed.), Bohemia in History, Cambridge University Press 1998.
- POLIŠENSKÝ Josef, History of Czechoslovakia in Outline, Praha: Bohemia International, 1991.